

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-50. (Cancelled).

51. (Currently Amended) A method of diagnosing lung damage in a mammal, said method comprising:

identifying a mammal who is asymptomatic to lung damage ~~or wherein the clinical diagnosis of lung damage in said mammal cannot otherwise be confirmed without the aid of one or more invasive procedures;~~

measuring a level of SP-B in a body fluid of the mammal;

comparing the measured level of SP-B to a normal reference level of SP-B; and

detecting an increase in ~~determining said mammal has lung damage if~~ the measured level of SP-B in the mammal, wherein said increase is indicative of lung damage in the mammal is greater than the normal reference level of SP-B.

52. (Cancelled).

53. (Currently Amended) A method of diagnosing lung damage in a mammal who has been exposed to a lung injury factor, said method comprising:

identifying a mammal who has been exposed to a foreign agent, a noxious or toxic agent, or a therapeutic agent;

measuring a level of SP-B in a body fluid of the mammal;

comparing the measured level of SP-B to a normal reference level of SP-B; and

detecting an increase in the measured level of SP-B in the mammal, wherein said increase is indicative of lung damage in the mammal,

~~The method of claim 51, wherein the clinical diagnosis of lung damage in the mammal cannot otherwise be confirmed without the aid of one or more invasive procedures.~~

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51, wherein said body fluid is blood.

55. (Cancelled).
56. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, wherein said body fluid is blood.
57. (Currently Amended) A method of diagnosing alveolo-capillary membrane damage in a mammal, said method comprising:
- identifying a mammal who is asymptomatic to alveolo-capillary membrane damage ~~or wherein the clinical diagnosis of alveolo-capillary membrane damage in said mammal cannot otherwise be confirmed without the aid of one or more invasive procedures;~~
 - measuring a level of SP-B in a body fluid of the mammal;
 - comparing the measured level of SP-B to a normal reference level of SP-B; and
 - detecting an increase in ~~determining said mammal has alveolo-capillary membrane damage if the measured level of SP-B in the mammal, wherein said increase is indicative of alveolo-capillary membrane damage in the mammal is greater than the normal reference level of~~ SP-B.
58. (Cancelled).
59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the clinical diagnosis of alveolo-capillary membrane damage in the mammal cannot otherwise be confirmed without the aid of one or more invasive procedures.
60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein said body fluid is blood.
61. (Cancelled).
62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 59, wherein said body fluid is blood.
63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51, wherein the mammal is a human.
64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the mammal is a human.

65-68. (Cancelled).

69. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 57, wherein said increase is indicative of lung damage in the mammal ~~further comprising determining said mammal has lung damage if the measured level of SP-B is greater than the normal reference level of SP-B.~~

70-72. (Cancelled).

73. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein the mammal has been exposed to smoke, methotrexate, bleomycin, radiation therapy, or paraquat.

74. (New) The method of claim 51, further comprising measuring the SP-B level in the body fluid by:

using a diagnostic kit for assaying a serum sample, said diagnostic kit comprising an agent for detecting SP-B and a reagent.

75. (New) The method of claim 53, further comprising measuring the SP-B level in the body fluid by:

using a diagnostic kit for assaying a serum sample, said diagnostic kit comprising an agent for detecting SP-B and a reagent.

76. (New) The method of claim 57, further comprising measuring the SP-B level in the body fluid by:

using a diagnostic kit for assaying a serum sample, said diagnostic kit comprising an agent for detecting SP-B and a reagent.